

Fall 2008

Brazen (Fall 2008)

Hollins University

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HOLLINS
UNIVERSITY

President Nancy Oliver Gray Talks About Gender & Women's Studies

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Interview by Dr. LeeRay M. Costa

In celebration of the ten year anniversary of Gender and Women's Studies as a major at Hollins, I invited President Nancy Oliver Gray to share her perspective on our program and this significant milestone. The following interview was conducted in her office during the waning days of summer, and I thank her for graciously fitting me into her notoriously demanding schedule.

In what follows she shares her thoughts about the significance of Gender and Women's Studies as a field

and as an interdisciplinary undergraduate program. President Gray also talks about the importance of feminist movement to her own life and career trajectory, and shares some poignant personal stories about sexism and her struggles as a working woman and mother.

Dr. Costa: This year we are celebrating our tenth year anniversary of Gender and Women's Studies as a major at Hollins. In your opinion, what is the significance of that milestone?

President Gray: As I think about gender and women's studies over my



Photo from <http://www.myroanokestory.com>

Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance

Meeting every Monday in the Rat at 9pm, the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance (FMLA) of Hollins University hopes to inspire activism and feminist change. After a successful year, they are working to make the 2008-2009 school year even more productive. Want to know what to look forward to this year? The ladies of FMLA plan to team up with HAB to support Shelby Knox's lecture on September 18, hold their annual Pay Equity Bake Sale, receive training from the Planned Parenthood Community Educator, organize the Vagina Monologues, help with International Women's Day, hold film screenings, help promote activism towards body image, and spotlighting and supporting new international legislation. Interested? Join our facebook group or contact Courtney Chenette ('09) at cchenette@hollins.edu for exciting details about this school year!

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From the Director's Desk ... Dr. LeeRay Costa

As the 2008–2009 academic year begins, we have much to celebrate. First, we have a new name! We are now officially the Gender and Women's Studies Program at Hollins. For the past several years GWS faculty and council members have discussed the importance of a name change and through consensus building, have agreed upon our new name. We believe Gender and Women's Studies more appropriately represents the range of courses we offer and the interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks of our constantly evolving discipline. While our course offerings will continue to be listed in the registrar's course list with the WS prefix this fall, in the spring of 2009 we will adopt the new prefix GWS. Keep this in mind when trying to locate our courses during the spring academic advising period.

In order to help you remember our new name, we commissioned a new logo that you will find on the first page of our newsletter and heretofore on all GWS documents and textual media (posters, flyers, correspondence, etc...). Created by Kim Bratic, Marketing Manager for the Jefferson Center Foundation, the GWS logo offers a strong visual representation for the program. The color choice of purple is a nod to author Alice Walker's definition of womanism: "Womanism is to feminism as purple is to lavender" (1983, *Making Face, Making Soul*). We hope that you like the logo as much as we do.

Over the summer months, a wonderful gift arrived from Hollins alumna Mildred Emory Persinger '39. Many of you may recall that our award in Gender and Women's Studies is in part named after Mildred who has spent her life as an advocate and activist around issues of gender, race, and class. Mildred's gift is an extensive archive of over sixty years of printed materials documenting the international women's movement and civil rights movement, as well as her participation in other critical social issues. These materials are housed in the Wyndham Robertson Library and will soon be available for use by the Hollins community. We are especially thankful to Mildred for this gift which will enrich our teaching and scholarship in the Gender and Women's Studies Program.

Finally, and most importantly, this year we celebrate the ten-year anniversary of the Gender and Women's Studies major. While Hollins students have been agitating for courses on women and gender at least since the late 60s (a brief perusal of old *Hollins Columns* yields fascinating information on this topic), women's studies was not really formally integrated into the curriculum until 1994 in the old general education program called "Pathways." In 1998 Women's Studies became an official major. In celebration of this achievement I interviewed President Nancy Oliver Gray and invited her to offer her perspective on the Gender and Women's Studies Program at Hollins (page 1).

The past year has also brought about a number of additional changes for our program. We said goodbye to Dr. Kim Rhodes this summer (page 3) who has taken a new position at Drew University. And we welcome several new faculty members teaching in GWS. Dr. Rachel Nuñez, whose appointment is in History, will be offering three cross-listed courses with GWS. Dr. Catherine Leonard, Rachel MacKnight J.D., and Judy Nye will be joining us this year as visiting adjunct professors and will offer a range of courses both new and old (page 9).

This issue of our newsletter is full of articles and information that I hope you will find of interest. Please help me welcome Paige Oberlin as our new newsletter editor. Majoring in Political Science and minoring in GWS, Paige is excited to combine her three great passions in this newsletter; writing, Gender and Women's Studies, and feminist activism. Please be sure to share your ideas, comments and criticisms of the newsletter with her. And if you have any suggestions for the newsletter name, let her know. We hope to officially name our newsletter in the Spring 2009 issue.

I am excited about the year ahead and I invite you to learn more about the Gender and Women's Studies Program by talking with students and faculty, attending our events, and joining our Facebook group for up-to-date notifications and thoughtful feminist community.

Now on FACEBOOK Check out the GWS Facebook Group: "Women's Studies at Hollins" to keep up with all the department news and learn about fellow Hollins members!



Faculty & Alumnae Accomplishments and News

New Faculty: A Big Hello!



We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new faculty in Gender and Women's Studies. Catherine Leonard, Judy Nye, Rachel Nuñez, and Rachel McKnight. These faculty members will enrich our program and the experiences of our students.

Faculty:

Dr. Michelle Abate: *Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History*, was published this summer by Temple University Press. The book was featured in the July 11th issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Dr. Susan Thomas: Co-organized a Film Festival for Roanoke's Pride in the Park this fall. For more information see page 8, visit: <http://www.roanokepride.com> or contact sthomas@hollins.edu

Dr. Jong Ra: Is co-investigating the impact of gender separation on learning efficacy in Roanoke high school settings with the principal of William Fleming High School, Hollins alumna Susan Willis.

Dr. LeeRay Costa: Completed fieldwork on the Big Island of Hawai'i during her spring 2008 sabbatical. This November she will present her co-authored paper (with Dr. Kathryn Besio, U Hawai'i, Hilo), "Eating Hawai'i: Agritourism and the Big Island Foodscape" at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in San Francisco.

Dr. Lori Joseph: Will show her film "One Hellewa Hand" at the annual conference of the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language and Gender in Nashville this coming October.

Alumnae:

Writtika Roy: Last spring Writtika was awarded the Mildred Persinger-Shocky Pilafian Award in Gender and Women's Studies. After completing her senior thesis, "Childbirth and the Internal Colonization of Women's Bodies," she's considering changing the OB/GYN system in America altogether. As a future doctor and public health researcher, she hopes to use the "bottom-up" approach to advocate for oppressed groups, in America and internationally. She is currently attending medical school at the University of Mississippi.

Emily Abeles: Just finished her second year teaching special education in high school and re-joined Teach for America in a quest for special education training.

Victoria Crump: Was recently accepted into the Gender Studies Ph.D. program at Indiana University (Bloomington) and will attend in the Fall of 2009. She was also accepted into the Hollins Certificate of Advanced Studies program. She volunteers with the Roanoke organization In-Lighten.

Farewell to Dr. Kim Rhodes

It is with great sadness that we in Gender and Women's Studies bid farewell to our colleague and friend, Dr. Kim Rhodes. Dr. Rhodes has been a critical member of the Women's Studies Council for ten years, and an exemplary scholar and colleague. Her expertise in feminism and art history has benefitted not only Hollins students lucky enough to enroll in her courses, but also the entire Hollins community in, for example, the phenomenal show she curated in 2007 "Looking Inside Godey's Lady's Book: Dress and Domesticity in the Nineteenth Century."

This fall Dr. Rhodes will take up her new position as Associate Professor of Art History at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, where she will be teaching the modern and contemporary portion of the curriculum. She will also serve as Director of the NY Semester on Contemporary Art, an off-campus program that introduces undergraduate art history and studio majors to contemporary art through gallery, museum, and studio visits in New York City. Like Hollins, Drew has a strong Women's Studies program to which Dr. Rhodes plans to contribute. Dr. Rhodes welcomes your emails at krhodes@drew.edu. We congratulate Dr. Rhodes on her new position and wish her great success in her future endeavors.

The Twilight Epidemic by Paige Oberlin '11

Like much of the country, I anxiously awaited the release of *Breaking Dawn* this summer. I didn't catch on to the *Twilight* bandwagon until the end of July, so I read the books in rapid succession and only had to wait a few days for the last book of the saga. Perhaps because I read the books so closely together (one a day), or perhaps because I'm already highly tuned to women's issues, several aspects of the books severely disturbed me. *SPOILERS*

Young women not only fell in love with Stephanie Meyers' enthralling vampire tale, but also fell hard for vampire hottie Edward Cullen; thus, the idolization of Edward and Bella's relationship is so bothersome, because Edward is flat out an abusively controlling boyfriend. While, admittedly, I was a bit infatuated with the gorgeous, rich, and superhumanly strong Edward, a few hundred pages into the human vampire relationship, Edward's controlling habits and Bella's codependent behavior became too much for my feminist heart to bear. Edward, under the pretense of protection, constantly tells Bella what she can and cannot do. At first, his protection of the weak and vulnerable human, Bella, is a tiny bit sweet. But, he controls every aspect of her life instead of letting her make her own choices. This infiltrates Bella's college decisions, the car she drives, and even where she goes on weekends. This relationship, although annoying, doesn't become a huge issue until *New Moon*. In the second book of the saga, in another effort to protect Bella, Edward leaves the small town of Forks in the hopes that Bella can get on with her life. But, instead, Bella completely shuts down when Edward leaves. She becomes horribly depressed and the only reason she doesn't kill herself is because she promised Edward she would not harm herself. She performs only basic functions so her father won't worry about her. Months and months into Edward's absence she starts engaging in hazardous activities like approaching potentially dangerous men on a dark street outside of a bar and cliff diving. Bella is deliberately putting herself in these situations for the sole purpose of hearing Edward's voice. These self destructive and self sacrificing habits define the *Twilight* saga; Bella is constantly giving up what is important to her, because Edward is the center of her life.

The leading character of Stephanie Meyer's novels has no autonomy, no sense of self outside of Edward. The country wide adoration of *Twilight* sends out a relationship model that young people should absolutely not emulate. Unfortunately, in the wake of Stephanie Meyers' bestselling vampire saga, millions of girls are aching to have a boyfriend like Edward. I can only hope that those infatuated with the controlling vampire choose a Gender and Women's Studies class before they choose a new relationship.

Feminism in the City by Charlsie Niemiec '10

After the 2008 January Short Term Feminist trip to New York City with Professor Julie Pfeiffer, I took it upon myself to spend my summer in the city putting feminism, something that I strongly believe in, into action. After contacting feminist authors Amy Richards and Jennifer Baumgardner, who were Hollins' tour guides in January, I decided to spend a month in New York City working as an intern for their speakers bureau, Soapbox Inc.

Throughout June and July, I lived at the New School residence in the Financial District of Manhattan and worked out of Richards and Baumgardner's apartments. On days when I worked out of Richards' Lower East Side apartment, I spent the bulk of my time scheduling speakers such as Catharine MacKinnon, Loretta Ross, Ellen Bravo, Sheryl Oring, and Courtney Martin. My tasks would include scheduling events at universities ranging from Queens University in Canada to Yale University, working out the details of speaking engagements, and finding possible schools that would be interested in Soapbox Inc. speakers. Occasionally, I did personal tasks, but Richards kept it strictly professional. When working for Baumgardner in her Brooklyn apartment, I mainly focused my projects around her documentary "I Was Raped," the follow-up to her film "I Had An Abortion." I contacted organizations and projects that focused on rape, all while helping Baumgardner plan for an outreach program to colleges this fall. On top of this, I was responsible for helping Baumgardner plan her 2008–2009 school year as a visiting professor of English at the New School. I helped put together her syllabus for her Advocacy Journalism course. Baumgardner, always busy with e-mails and phone calls, managed to take time out of her schedule to arrange for me and her other intern to attend a meeting at *CosmoGirl*, a magazine for whom Baumgardner occasionally writes. When sitting in Baumgardner's kitchen, opportunities seemed endless.

Working for Richards and Baumgardner was well worth it. The opportunities and insight I was able to gain will serve me well throughout the future in my career and as a day-to-day feminist. But it wasn't all work and no play. Richards and Baumgardner provided a lot of nice lunches and an unforgettable week at Gloria Steinem's Upper East Side apartment where I stayed to take care of Galahad, Gloria's cat that suffers from diabetes, while she was out of town. Being able to stay in this feminist icon's house was not only awe-inspiring, but refreshingly different from my tiny, mouse infested New School University dorm room. Working with such inspiring feminists has made me grateful for my experience in New York, and at the same time, hopeful for the future of feminism.

Selling the Vagina Monologues Off-Campus

(A Post College Perspective) by Kathryn Berg '05



It is safe to say that *The Vagina Monologues* has become a part of many Americans' common vocabulary. How do I know? I asked. I went door-to-door asking small business owners in Rochester, New York. From the bakery to the bowling alley to the bookstore, from the Afro-centric beauty parlor to the gay novelty shop, this past winter I waltzed in store after restaurant wearing my most professional attire and queried, "Have you ever heard of *The Vagina Monologues*?" Almost invariably the answer was yes --often paired with a smile. I was not doing field research, nor was I out merely to attract attention (although that is definitely part of the job.) The event was V-Day's 10th anniversary, and the task at hand was face-to-face fundraising. As Volunteer Fundraising Manager, I sold ad space for Rochester, New York's second annual community production of *The Vagina Monologues*.

My initial sales pitch was not so direct. At first, I took a more conservative approach, presenting myself on behalf of an annual benefit for local rape crisis services. After the tenth person who wouldn't look me in the eye muttered that I was one of a dozen non-for-profit organizations that had solicited them in the past week, I realized I had to change my angle. "Have you ever heard of *The Vagina Monologues*?" I asked the owner of Chester Cab's Pizza, who took the chance

Selling the Vagina Monologues Off- Campus

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to interrogate me --until I made him blush and agree to donate pizza for a cast rehearsal (as long as I would get out so he could concentrate on what he was doing).

Through V-Day (the worldwide campaign to end violence against women and girls which encompasses *The Vagina Monologues*), I was able to apply skills acquired at that sales job I was working to pay the bills, and pair them with my feminist know-how to do valuable volunteer work for a cause that empowered women. This became an opportunity to banter about patriarchy with local business owners, such as the Thai restaurant owner who shared that Hillary was his choice for president, lamenting that America was behind the times when it came to representing women in government. I used the solicitation process to educate on local rape crisis services, and expand the image of our sponsoring organization, *Planned Parenthood*.

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Interview with President Gray

lifetime, it has increasingly emerged as an important field of study and I think it's critically important that we have this program at Hollins. First it is an important curricular home for the study of women and gender. Secondly, at Hollins I have been impressed with its interdisciplinary significance. Gender and women's studies as a field has deep interdisciplinary roots ... but at Hollins as we have built this program with the Women's Studies Council, I've been impressed how very deep roots have grown out from that curricular home. There is a very strong interdisciplinary presence *within* the program, but that also permeates out into other departments on campus. Thirdly I think your program has provided important leadership and service to the university in several ways. The conference that we're holding that will focus on women in math and science this spring, really evolved from the work that you started in 2006 [Women's Leadership and Social Change Conference]. I think this effort is really important and I hope that our conference will become a permanent activity at Hollins with greater and greater quality and recognition. Similarly I think your program has helped students, especially those students interested in social activism, find a place and a way to think about their interests and how to have an impact in the world. So, from the curricular home, to the interdisciplinary impact to the service to the university, this is a wonderful milestone anniversary and I congratulate you and Susan, and the other members of the program, as well as those who have come before you.

Dr. Costa: What role do you think Gender and Women's Studies should play at an all women's college?

President Gray: First of all, because our mission is to serve undergraduate women, I think part of our mission is having the curricular home and the focal point on women and gender studies. As women, we are all affected by gendered relationships, so I think it becomes very important to offer this program which is consistent with our mission. I know that there are some who believe that at a women's college you really don't need this program, but I disagree. I think the field itself has grown significantly within my lifetime and certainly within the last ten

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Ashlee's Story

I've had a terrible year. I came within a hair's breath of death. I'm not exactly sure how I recovered, considering the numerous life-threatening illnesses I faced. I do know that being an African-American woman without health insurance didn't make my journey through the medical industrial complex simple or easy. Still, here I am—and I'm thrilled to be back at Hollins.

I have systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) and rheumatoid arthritis. SLE is an autoimmune disease that can affect various parts of the body, including the skin, joints, heart, lungs, blood, kidneys, and brain. Generally, no two people with systemic lupus will have identical symptoms. Systemic lupus may include periods in which few, if any, symptoms are evident ("remission") and other times when the disease becomes more active ("flare"). Most often when people mention "lupus," they are referring to the systemic form of the disease. In December 2007, my lupus became very active. I was reduced to sleeping virtually all of the time.

When I was awake, my speech was impaired and my handwriting and spelling were reduced to the first grade level. I needed help.

In January, I was admitted to Riverside Regional Medical Center. Later I was taken to Sentara Hospital. The doctors at both hospitals were not able to provide relief. They told me to go home. This to a woman who could not bathe, prepare food, dress, walk or use the restroom. I was not home very long when, believe it or not, my condition worsened. I had a family member call an ambulance because I could barely breathe. At the hospital, I fell into a coma. I was suffering from congestive heart and respiratory failure. When I awoke a few days later in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), I was on life support. Now that was frightening. Even more frightening, however, what being taken off of life support, moved out of ICU and told, "We can't do anything else. You'll have to go home." I wondered if I was being sent home without being treated because I didn't have that magic insurance card. What do you think? (My former rheumatologist would no longer see me as a patient because of my lack of insurance; he would not even aid the hospital by simply sending in medical records or aiding in my diagnosis).

Things began to get much better for me as soon as my mother decided to take me to VCU Medical Center where I was immediately admitted. What a difference a good hospital makes. And how much more comfortable I felt having mostly women physicians at VCU compared with the all-male staff at Riverside. I felt comfortable asking, "Am I am still going to be able to bear children?" and "Will I ever have a menstrual cycle again?" The women physicians took a lot more time with me, to explain my illnesses to me, to discuss my long-term prognosis. I don't know, it just seemed that the gender dynamics at VCU were much more conducive to my healing than I found elsewhere. It was a relief.

I was also so delighted to see a Hollins student in my room one afternoon. Megan Miller was "in the area" and stopped by to see me. She comforted me and stayed until I fell asleep that night. Thank you Megan. And thanks to former Hollins staff member Molly Meredith, who also stopped by for a very welcome visit. Soon enough, all of my diagnosed illnesses were treated. Even though I had no insurance, VCU gave me good medical care free of charge. They even provided rehabilitation services so that I could learn how to walk again. Best of all, my VCU rheumatologist, Dr. Lenore Buckley, voluntarily took me in as her long-term patient. Just what the doctor ordered.

I am grateful for my mother and my aunt, without whom I would not have recovered. I am also grateful for the support and care I received from VCU physicians as well as from Hollins University faculty and staff. Best of all, I am now able to return to Hollins and continue my education. I know that wherever I go I will always have Hollins women to count on, lean on and to give me courage when life is tough. I tell you my story in high spirit, because no matter what wave may rock your yacht or what fog may blur your vision, NEVER and I mean NEVER lose your passion for what you want in life. KEEP MOVING FORWARD!

Peace, Love, and Humanity,

Ashlee Oliver

Selling the Vagina Monologues

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In the end, these solicitations for ad sales and raffle prizes (spanning everything from tattoo gift certificates to fine dining) brought in nearly double my assigned dollar goal. No less important, my role as Volunteer Fundraising Manager gave me a way to reach out to well over a hundred businesses in Rochester, inviting them, in lesser words, to be a part of their community's herstory and play a part in building a community to end violence against women.

Community; on a college campus, most students don't have to walk much farther than their dorm room to find it. As for progressive feminist community, at Hollins you'd have to make at least some small effort to avoid it if you wanted to. It is not the sort of space I've been able to take for granted since graduating in 2005. And this perhaps explains Eve Ensler's rule that only one performance is allowed per geographical community per year excepting college campuses. Campuses tend to be worlds unto themselves, with built-in opportunities for students to ally with peers for political causes.

By performing in *The Vagina Monologues* as a freshman I was better able to understand and tap into the feminism around me. In contrast to this experience on Hollins campus, even those friends of mine who have landed jobs in not-for-profit women-centered organizations since graduating have not typically found that their work environment lends to a sense of feminist community. For that reason among others, V-Day continues to make a transformative impact. This feminist staple of so many colleges is still branching out as graduating feminists bring the performance to new communities each year. I for one know that my participation in Rochester's first and second annual V-Day campaigns helped to build new community in the effort to end violence against women, seeing as it was the first time *Joe Llegno's Auto* made a donation to *Planned Parenthood of the Rochester-Syracuse Region*.

Hollins introduced me to *The Vagina Monologues* as part of a broader college experience (along with essays by Audre Lorde, dancing by Isadora Duncan, and many a beautiful drag king). This exposure to V-Day as an undergraduate gave me the savvy to recognize its capacity beyond the university setting as a tool for creating community that is not so readily available in the so-called "real world." By performing in Rochester's first annual V-Day campaign, and acting as Volunteer Fundraising Manager in the second, I was able to connect with like-minded feminists I did not find at other volunteer opportunities or social venues. My involvement in V-Day was both an awesome experience of raising awareness and funds in the effort to end violence against women, as well as the resume builder I needed to transition from my previous employment in a sales position to my current job: fundraising for the development department at a top-ten university.

While Eve Ensler all but requires that *The Vagina Monologues* be performed as a fundraiser, she stresses that empowerment is the overriding goal. Clearly, I'm not the only one who has found V-Day so empowering (or such a money-maker!); this ten-year-old campaign has raised over fifty million dollars and been performed in countries all over the world. In some communities where V-Day is now a long-standing tradition, some fear this performance is no longer cutting edge and therefore questionable as an educational tool. To allay such concerns, I should mention that although most Rochesterians are familiar with the title, not as many had seen an actual show. "Have you ever heard of *The Vagina Monologues*?" I'd ask, and was -to my surprise- met with pleasant faces of recognition. However, when I followed with the question, "Have you ever see the show?," more often than not the reply was no. Ten years into Eve Ensler's campaign and two years out of Hollins University, this is the new place where my conversation began as our work continues.

Kathryn Berg (aka Berg) recently moved to Chicago, IL with her partner, where she has taken a job in development at the University of Chicago. Her website, *Berg's Queer Foot Porn*, continues to be a work in progress. She also organizes themed ceremonies in honor of Goddess, the latest of which was a menarche to celebrate menstruation.



Image from <http://www.benchtheatre.org>

Other Events of Interest

Jamaica Kincaid

Jamaica Kincaid will be speaking at Hollins on Thursday, November 13 in the Theatre at 8:15 PM. Kincaid is an acclaimed writer and novelist; her books include "At the Bottom of the River", "Lucy", "Annie John" and a memoir which received a National Book Award nomination and the Prix Femina Etranger, "My Brother". Kincaid's work addresses issues of race, class, gender and colonialism. She is currently a visiting lecturer on African and African American Studies and on English and American Literature and Language at Harvard University. This reading is the inaugural event for the Dee Hull Everist Visiting Speaker Series which will bring many speakers of international reputation to Hollins.

Women's Rights and the Constitution

Anne M. Coughlin will lead a lecture discussing Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's career and accomplishments with respect to "Women's Rights and the Constitution". Ms. Coughlin is O.M. Vicars Professor of Law at the University of Virginia School of Law. She will be speaking in the Hollins Room in the Wyndham Robertson Library on Wednesday, September 17 at 7:00PM.



Film Festival

Professor Susan Thomas co-organized a Film Festival for Roanoke's Pride in the Park at Hollins. On September 14th at 7:00 PM Hollins will show *Semper Fi: One Marine's Journey*, the story of a gay marine's tour in Iraq and his actions against the war upon returning home. On October 19th at 7:00 PM *Another Woman*, a film that tells the tale of Daniel's transformation to Lea, and Lea's journey into the heart in Paris, will be shown. Both screenings will be in the Richard Wetherill Visual Arts Center.



Image from <http://www.roanokepride.com>

Take Back the Night

Come support your campus community on Thursday, October 23 by attending the CASA-sponsored Take Back the Night. It will involve a slow walk around front quad where students, faculty, campus clubs and organizations can unite, symbolizing their commitment to stopping the cycle of sexual violence and making women and men feel safe and empowered. For more information contact Courtney Chenette ('09) at cchenette@hollins.edu



Image from <http://www.nmsu.edu>

Gender & Women's Studies Course Offerings

Fall 2008

WS 141 Intro to Gender & Women's Studies with Professor Costa T/R 1:00–2:30 PM

WS 209 Feminist Philosophies with Professor Gettings M/W/F 11:30 AM–12:30 PM

WS 213 Globalization & Poverty with Professor Thomas T/R 1:00–2:30 PM

WS 225 Gender & Women's History–Early Modern Europe with Professor Nuñez T/R 8:50–10:20 AM***

WS 250 Gender & Animal Rights with Professor Thomas M/W 1:10–2:40 PM*

WS 250 Gender, Culture, Visual Media with Professor Leonard M/W/F 10:20–11:20 AM***

WS 307 Women & Work with Professor Nye M/W 2:50–4:20 PM***

WS 314 Women & Art with Professor Nolan M/W 1:10–2:40 PM

WS 338 Survey of Feminist Thought with Professor Thomas M/W 11:30 AM–1:00 PM

WS 345 Arab Women Writers with Professor Kaldas M/W 11:30 AM–1:00 PM

Spring 2009

GWS 141 Intro to Gender & Women's Studies with Professor Leonard T/R 10:30 AM–12:00 PM**

GWS 215 Gender and Communication with Professor Joseph T/R 10:30 AM–12:00 PM

GWS 226 Gender & Women's History– Modern Europe with Professor Nuñez T/R 8:50–10:20 AM***

GWS 230 Textual Construction of Gender with Professor Moriarty T/R 1:00–2:30 PM

GWS 250 Food/Culture/Social Justice with Professor Costa M/W 1:10–2:40 PM*

GWS 250 Domestic Violence Law with Rachel MacKnight T/R 6:00–7:30 PM***

GWS 250 Gender and Sports with Professor Leonard T/R 2:40–4:10 PM***

GWS 312 Women & Social Movements with Professor Costa T/R 1:00–2:30 PM

GWS 334 Gender & Imperialism with Professor Nuñez M/W 1:10–2:40 PM***

GWS 382 Advanced Studies: Literature of Protest with Professor Abate M/W 2:50–4:20 PM

GWS 470 Seminar in Gender & Women's Studies with Professor Costa T/R 10:30 AM–12:00PM

*Indicates new course

**Indicates new faculty

*** Indicates both

New Majors



Charlsie Niemiec '10

The GWS program would like to welcome sophomore Jennifer Walton and junior Charlsie Niemiec to its department as majors. Jennifer is a dedicated member of FMLA and lives in NEFA's specialty housing. Charlsie Niemiec is also a dedicated member of FMLA and has spent time bringing feminist speakers such as Jessica Valenti and Kate Bornstein to campus.

Welcome!



Jennifer Walton '11

First Year Seminars: Introducing Students to Gender and Women's Studies

CHEM/GWS- Women of Discovery-This class investigates successful women mathematicians', scientists', and physicians' styles of leadership in research, education, academic administration, business, and government. Students will learn about women who have been leaders in the past and hear from women who are currently leaders in their fields with Professor Boatman and Professor Diefenderfer

DANCE/GWS- Art & Performance as a Way to Inhabit the World: the Unmade Project- Explores how artists create, explore, and develop works, and how performances speak to individuals. Students will learn the ways in which performance allows for physical interactions and how the body is involved. Students will collaborate to make a performance work with Professor Bullock and Professor Burchfield.

ENG/GWS- Women, Health, and Power-This course works from the premise that "knowledge is power" to the conclusion that self-knowledge leads to personal and community empowerment. Investigates issues such as fertility, mental health, body image, and sexualities with Professor Pfeiffer.

Save the Dates!

Lunch-A-Month: October 8th & November 11th at 12:00PM in the Glass Dining Room

Shelby Knox: September 18th at 7:00 PM in the VAC

Tania Stewart & Patrice Guillory (Feminist Majority Foundation): September 18th & 19th (They will be speaking in classes as well as on a panel following Shelby Knox's presentation.)

Winter Solstice Potluck & Gift Exchange: December 12th

Reinvention by Linda Weary

I would have never thought that I would have returned to college to strive for a graduate degree. I'm currently 61 years old to be exact. In the 1960s I got married, graduated from high school and got a job. In the 1970s I got a divorce, quit my job, took my retirement money and invested in reinventing myself by going to college and teaching for several years. In the 1980s and 1990s I worked on the Hollins campus in the library, raised and home schooled my children from my second marriage. Then in 2005 I was working as a secretary full-time and was encouraged to return to college to obtain a masters degree and consider teaching at the college level. Within two weeks I was enrolled at Hollins and taking my first class and the reinvention started again.

I have always loved the Hollins campus, the professors who were always encouraging and helping us with our new efforts, and I knew that the quality of courses there were the best. The structure of the Liberal Arts graduate program gave me the opportunity to take courses that I wanted to take. I was always excited and raving about my classes and found that I was often pushing myself to take two or even three in a semester while I worked full-time. The key was that I controlled the subject matter and was able to keep the degree going in the direction of my personal interests.

Sociology had been suggested as a possible area that I might like to concentrate on for my course work, so I dove in and took several. I was curious about the Women's Studies courses. I had never had the opportunity to take a Women's Studies course. When I went to college the courses didn't exist. So curiosity got the best of me and I took one. To my surprise I fell in love with the material and was amazed at the topics that were explored. The books expanded my perspective and challenged my small town look at the world. Most of all I realized that much of the material I could relate to in one way or another because since I was twice as old as the other students I had lived through many of the issues or topics they were reading about for the first time. I discovered that one Women's Studies course led to another and before I knew it I was addicted. I couldn't stop. I had to take just one more, until I had reached the maximum that I could take in the masters' degree program.

The courses were stimulating, the books we had to read for the courses constantly broadened our perspectives, and our understanding of the material was constantly enriched. I often found that if we were given the option to pick six of eight or ten books, I always bought all ten and somehow managed to read all of them with eager enthusiasm. The material covered was sometimes challenging to complete in the time given, but was always well worth the effort.

When we came to the classes prepared and discussed the material for that lesson, I found that I enjoyed the discovery of not only the author's perspective and the instructor's insights, but also the many aspects and perspectives that each graduate student in that class brought to the mix. I hardly ever came out of a class without a couple of topics that I wanted to search on the internet or in the library just a little more in depth for my own curiosity.

I still wanted to take graduate courses, so I applied to start the Certificate for Advanced Studies (CAS) at Hollins. That way I could continue to take ten more courses and apply to universities for admission to a doctoral program. So after I graduated in May 2007 with my MA in Social Sciences with a double emphasis in Sociology and Women's Studies I applied and was accepted into the CAS program. Now I'm applying to a doctoral program that offers a degree in Women's Studies. Having a good GPA, having good recommendations and being highly motivated critical for grad school.

The tough part is finding the university that is right for you. There are only about a dozen campuses in the United States that offer doctorates in Women's Studies. Make sure the one you want offers the mentors and opportunities that match your interests. I want to explore mortuary interpretations of Bronze and Iron Age women in Central Asia. What ever possessed me to consider this path you ask? I took a course with Andrew Matzner on "Women Warriors: Amazon Women to the Citadel". One of the books was written by Jeannine Davis-Kimball called *Warrior Women*. I enjoyed the books for the course, but that book seemed to stick out for me. I began to read her articles and other books. I became more and more curious about warrior women of the Bronze and Iron Age in Central Asia. I discovered that she now is president of the Center for the Study of Eurasian Nomads which has been sponsoring survey teams that the Smithsonian Institute is supporting each summer for study of the Mongolian countryside and its burial sites.

Hollins and her professors helped me to feel that I could do anything if I set my mind to it. So I stepped out and contacted Dr. Davis-Kimball. She told me to apply, which I did. Dr. William Honeychurch was the director of the expedition and after interviewing me he suggested that I attend the last session of the past summer, since that would be the wrap-up session for the entire five year survey. I would learn each job and have an opportunity to gain knowledge



about the areas I wanted to research. In addition to all that, as one of the team, I would be able to use the information that they had gathered the entire five years to write my doctoral dissertation if I would like to use it. So I spent this past summer working on a bio-archaeological dig in the Gobi Desert of Mongolia with Dr. Bill Honeychurch of the Smithsonian Institute and Dr. Russell Nelson. I worked as part of the American team in conjunction with the Institute of Archaeology in Mongolia with their Mongolian team. There I was able to gain first hand experience in Mongolian methods of excavation, lab processes for the handling of materials for isotope, DNA and strontium testing that will be done at other labs in England and the United States. We learned to properly prepare the artifacts as we found them, including the

recording and documentation of all the thousands of pieces of artifacts made up of earthenware, birch bark, wood, lacquer, gold, textiles, bronze, human bones, faunal bones, and making illustrations that went along with the documentations and locations of the findings. The numbering, photographing and preparing for shipment back to the institute for further investigations were also done. We excavated a record 34 grave sites this summer, more than any session of the past five years worth of expeditions in the Gobi. We excavated a variety of grave sites and periods, slab burials, Xiongnu burials, Turk burials, Medieval, and more modern Mongols ranging from 2000 BC to 1000 years ago. We discovered a surprising amount of information from what was left mostly from robbed graves and occasionally found one that was intact and undisturbed for thousands of years.

In addition to the physical handling of artifacts I was able to be part of the team, exchange ideas and take workshops. Discussions with doctoral students and directors on the staff of the expedition offered leads for further information exchanges. Often no articles were written as an interpretation of the material recovered, just reports. So the area of interpretive articles is open. There is little or nothing known and we are the new explorers in a virgin land.

The Mongolian field has been closed to the Western world for thousands of years. When Russia took over they did work, but it was just documenting data and was seldom an interpretation of the findings. In 1990, when the Russians left, the academic world of Mongolia began to open up for the first time, allowing academics from other countries to come in and do expeditions in conjunction with Mongolian researchers. That area is so unknown to the rest of the world. It is a huge potential site for historians, researchers, archaeologists and those of us that want to study the women of the Eurasian steppes. Nothing is known of the social interactions and women of the ancient Mongolians. It is fertile ground for women who might want to blaze a trail and reveal the ancient women of Mongolia, whether they were warriors, wives, politicians or family members.



Interview with President Gray

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years. What we give women at Hollins is the opportunity to find their voices, to be empowered, regardless of their academic interests or their particular individual passions and dreams. So I think the benefits of a women's college that come from being in a setting where you are encouraged to think for yourself, to defend your beliefs, to speak up, to act on your beliefs, are taking place on this campus in every classroom and in every activity, and that's vitally who we are. But that doesn't suggest that students are exposed to women's studies or gender studies in the way your program exposes them. So for me these are very complementary, but not duplicate efforts.

Dr. Costa: I think the thing that needs to be emphasized is that there is a very self-conscious focus on women and on gendered relationships in the curriculum, in addition to things like race, class, sexuality, etc.. all the things that are at the core of what gender and women's studies is as a discipline. But that doesn't mean that everyone in every discipline has that kind of focus.

President Gray: That's right, and I think we do a good job of studying perhaps more *female* artists than a co-ed school, perhaps more *women* in the Bible than perhaps in a religion department in another school, perhaps more *female* historians, but it's still different than what those who are trained in the area of gender and women's studies are doing.

Dr. Costa: Are there any other ways that you would say that gender and women's studies enhances the education of Hollins students?

President Gray: Again, I think some of the outgrowth –such as the women's conference. Another example of the service piece is the Mildred Persinger gift. This gift we are receiving from Mildred is extraordinary. And her life story is extraordinary. I suspect that her comfort level in giving her papers to Hollins was because she knows her life's work is both studied and respected by the members of our faculty who are associated with the Gender and Women's Studies program.

Dr. Costa: And I think that gift is truly going to enhance our library holdings and what we can do in our curriculum, and in terms of reaching out to a much broader audience because people are going to come here to use that resource.

President Gray: Exactly. This gift will enhance our position as a women's college and the Gender and Women's Studies program at Hollins.

Dr. Costa: While numerous women's colleges have closed or gone co-ed in recent years, Hollins has remained steadfast in its commitment to educating women in a non-co-educational environment. In your opinion, why do we still need institutions like Hollins today?

President Gray: Three reasons. Despite the tremendous progress women have made in the past one hundred years or so, we have still not achieved equity in all fields. We have still not been able to resolve issues of how a woman simultaneously raises a family and pursues a career. So I think first of all, because that equity has not really been achieved, there is still an important mission for women's colleges. In some ways, like a program in Gender and Women's Studies that focuses a spotlight on gender studies, we are focusing an institutional spotlight on women. But secondly, the research absolutely substantiates the value of women's education in a single sex setting, even in the twenty-first century.

The study that was completed by the Women's College Coalition last spring, where we commissioned Hardwick Day to survey alumnae who had graduated from women's colleges between 1970 and 1997, absolutely supports the value of women's education. Hollins was one of 44 schools that participated in the study. When you compare the results of the women's college graduates to the women who graduated from private colleges, large private institutions, public flagship or all public institutions, the data demonstrate the value of women's education. For example, 53% of the graduates of women's colleges go on to earn graduate degrees, significantly higher than women from any other group. The next highest was 33% from private co-ed colleges. Our graduates talked about how they felt they were well prepared to speak in public, to work in groups, to appreciate how to work with people who were different from themselves in far greater numbers than their peers at other institutions. Not to surprise anyone, women who are graduates of women's colleges

believe that they developed more self-confidence than did their peers at other institutions. Similar results were found in a 2006 study using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement that compared students currently enrolled in women's colleges to those enrolled in co-ed institutions. So I think there is demonstrated value to what we are doing.

Thirdly, I think, and frankly probably women's studies has made some contribution to this along with neurobiology and other fields, the more we learn about differences in the male brain and female brain, about differences in how men develop and how women develop as human beings, we recognize there really are differences. I genuinely believe both men and women are able to do whatever we want to do. But the way males and females learn, the way we develop, is different. And for many college women, to have the freedom to be in a class without the distraction, the competition, or sometimes the domination of men, is very freeing. And women are able to grow in leaps and bounds, intellectually and in terms of their leadership abilities. That might not happen in a co-ed environment. So for all those reasons, I genuinely believe that our mission is as relevant in the twenty-first century as it has ever been.

Dr. Costa: Within the field of women's studies there is a big debate over how much of women's performance and behavior is biological and how much is social and cultural, and of course that's the nature/nurture debate. And a good portion of feminists would argue that it really isn't as much about the brain development, although they would acknowledge absolutely there are differences, but how significant are those differences? Many would argue in fact that the differences come from the social environment and how people are raised. So those certain things get played on and then reinforced and so the differences are increased rather than decreased.

As a cultural anthropologist what I think is interesting about this is when you begin to look at other cultures and compare how men and women behave, and what kinds of ideas people have about what men should be doing and what women should be doing, you find a *huge* range. That was the work of Margaret Mead, that's what she demonstrated. So it's really interesting to see what diversity there is, and that this therefore means we need to reflect back on what we are doing and ask more questions about how we are teaching women and how we are raising women to be so different from men, reinforcing those differences as opposed to downplaying them.

President Gray: Many would argue, and I think that this gets back to the nature/nurture debate, that women's leadership styles tend to be more collaborative in nature. They talk about the web of women working together. Is that because it is hard-wired or did we learn that behavior? But I think that it is wonderful we are being intentional about leadership development at Hollins for women. For example, we work on conflict management for women through the work of the Batten Leadership Institute, which, whether hard wired or learned environmentally, is a weakness for many women.

Dr. Costa : Well when the rules are set by men, you have to play by their rules. And if you don't learn that, it becomes much more difficult. So the question is, do we adapt to their rules, or do we change the game altogether?

President Gray: Right. But Hollins is a place where those kinds of questions can be asked, and *should* be asked.

Dr. Costa: Ok, the last set of questions is more personal. Did you take any classes in Gender and Women's Studies as a student? If so, was there anything notable you remember?

President Gray: LeeRay, this shows how really old I am! There was no opportunity to take women's studies at Vanderbilt! We didn't have a Women's Studies department in the late sixties and early seventies.

Dr. Costa: You know the first Women's Studies department was at San Diego State University in 1970, although classes were being offered at several institutions before that.

President Gray: And I graduated in 1973. So I didn't have the opportunity to take Women's Studies courses. However, I do remember the Women's Center at Vanderbilt being formed and I was peripherally involved in that. When I went back to work as an administrator at Vanderbilt in the late 70s, I was active in the Women's Center, and worked with an older woman who *insisted* in everything she wrote, that the appropriate pronoun was she/he and she used that pronoun when she spoke and in her writing. And I remember vividly, that was the first time I became aware of how much we use the pronoun "he," and I began to think about the impact of such language. At any rate, one of the women I worked with was hired to be the first full-time director of the Women's Center. I used to attend brown bag lunches at our center in its

early days. I still receive their newsletter.

Susan Willis, a classicist, was a phenomenal faculty member who was so instrumental in their Women's Center and starting their Women's Studies program. So, while I was very aware and involved as the Women Studies program and the women's center began to develop at Vanderbilt, I was never there at a time when I could take a course.

But I think that is sort of a good snapshot of how in my lifetime – I'm 57 – and from when I was 18 until now, there's been a *huge* change in this country. Such change would not have taken place if there had not been the kind of focus in the women's movement that there was. And in many ways, I've been the beneficiary of a lot of tough work others have done before me. Over the span of my career, I have seen doors open up for working women. When I started college, my options were to become a secretary, nurse, social worker, or teacher. I remember going to my *favorite* theatre professor saying: "I think I want to be an actress. What am I going to do if my acting career fails?" "Be a secretary" was his response. Consulting my favorite English professor, I said "I like this subject, I like reading, writing, and analyzing literature. What can I do with it?" The response was "Teach," and the implication was secondary school, but that is not what I wanted to do.

Dr. Costa: How did that make you feel?

President Gray: This is even better. As a teen and young adult, I was very focused on the question, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" During high school, at a church camp, I approached one of the pastors leading a session and told him: "I want to be a minister." "Well, honey, why don't you try to be a pastor's wife?"

Dr. Costa: What did you do? What did you think when he said that?

President Gray: You have to go back to that point in time; during the mid-60s, that was the world I knew and I just accepted it. During that time, I was encouraged to go to college to be educated and to learn to be a nurse or teacher, to fall back on, in case marriage didn't work. For me at that age, that was the world around me and I didn't question what I was told. But I had a burning desire to do *more*. I *knew* I wanted a career. And I guess that is why I was asking everybody "what can I do?" I knew that an important expression of my gifts was going to be through my work. So it was fortunate for me that my timing was right and I was able to take advantage of some of the advances and opportunities that have opened up for women during my working life.

Having said that, I also remember being the only female on the staff, having gotten promoted, going to my boss and informing him I was going to take another job because it involved less travel because I was pregnant. He looked at me and said, "so, you're just like the rest of them." So it's not like I have been free of those battles. I can remember in the 70s, wearing a suit and a little bow tie to fit into a man's world, and reading books suggesting successful women should have no family pictures in their offices or talk about their children, that you have to be one of the guys. And that's how I approached work, as one of the guys, because that's how I was told I was supposed to succeed. It's changed a lot. I've got family pictures and I can talk about my kids at work now.

Yet, there's a lot more change that still needs to happen. And I guess most poignantly for me, was the Hillary Clinton tear in New Hampshire. When she showed that side, it helped her campaign. People saw her differently. But it was a real sexist response. So, we still have a ways to go.

Dr. Costa: So what would you say that feminism means to you?

President Gray: I think the feminist movement has first evolved with very clear stages when you look at the history of the status of women. But certainly in my lifetime I think the feminist movement has resulted in opening up many more opportunities for women, coming much closer to establishing equality in terms of opportunities, pay, other things. And I think it has provided a lens for us to help understand how gender differences have and do affect how we look at the world. And I think the feminist movement has helped us appreciate the role women have played for thousands of years, but they really hadn't been part of the study of history or religion or other fields, until recently. And I think the feminist movement has helped us to begin to recapture the contributions of women in many fields.

Dr. Costa: So do you feel that feminism has had a significant impact on your personal life?

President Gray: Oh, without any question. Just look at my own life.

Dr. Costa: And how do you feel you raised your kids differently as a result?

President Gray: I'm a mother of boys. So I'm also concerned sometimes about men and their issues. I think my guys are about as supportive of women as they can be. They cook, they do their own laundry, they gravitate towards strong, independent women. They respect and work well with women. My middle son works for a female-owned environmental company. My youngest son is a teacher. They are looking for strong female partners and have considered careers without gender bias.

Dr. Costa: Well, because you're their role model for what a woman *can* be. It's very different from what you were seeing as a role model.

President Gray: It's very different from how I grew up. My sons have great respect for women, but frankly, great expectations for women that come with that too.

Dr. Costa: Do you think that there is still a need for feminist movement today? Why or why not?

President Gray: Yes. I don't think equality is totally established. I think we're still learning a lot. We've made great progress, but we're not there. And we go this far and we slip back. We are still not in a world where there is the kind of equality that we would hope there could be; we are struggling with family and work balance issues. I think we have a lot to learn still about how consciously and subconsciously the gender lens affects how we see the world. So I think we've still got a long way to go.



Mrs. Stevens Hears the Mermaids Singing

Film Screening and Q&A

"Linda Thornburg directs this feature film of magnificent scope that spans 75 years in the life of poet Hilary Stevens.... The film deftly weaves past and present, and paints a sensitive portrait of Mrs. Stevens' lesbian identity that spans nearly a century."

---*Curve Magazine*, November 2005

Mrs. Stevens Hears the Mermaids Singing will be shown on October 28th at 7:00 PM in the VAC. There will be a Q&A after the screening with filmmaker Linda Thornburg. Co-sponsored by the GWS program and Film department at Hollins.



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Gender & Women's Studies is an interdisciplinary program that examines how systems of oppression/resistance and privilege operate. It is designed to provide students with an understanding of the importance of gender as a category of analysis, and its intersections with race/ethnicity, class, age, sexual identity, and (dis)ability.

The Gender & Women's Studies faculty are dedicated to creating an environment that fosters critical thinking, supports student activism, and emphasizes faculty/student and peer mentoring. Students are encouraged to question conventional wisdom and to participate actively in their education.

Gender & Women's Studies has been an active department since 1998. For more information visit the department website at: <http://www.hollins.edu/undergrad/womenstudies.wom.htm>

If you would like to receive electronic or print copies of the Gender & Women's Studies Newsletter, send your contact information and delivery preference to lcosta@hollins.edu

